What Makes A Church Grow?

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The statement by Richard Rice (“An Enemy Defeated: Death and Resurrection,” Sept. 2004) that in Genesis 2:16, 17, “God wasn’t telling Adam what He would do to punish him if he sinned,” but only indicating the “natural consequence of sin,” is liable to be misunderstood. This consequence was “natural” only in the sense that it was predictable and easily preventable by taking heed of the warning. But it did not belong to the natural order, as if the tree of knowledge had been somehow deadly by nature. Nor was it unintended or removed from the direct control of the person giving the alert, as the case is when parents warn children about electrical wiring. The consequences of Adam’s sin were clearly mediated through God’s direct judgment (Gen. 3:9-19).

—Aecio E. Carius, AIIAS, Philippines.

I would like to thank you for the copies of Ministry (July 2004) you sent containing my article “Death of the Dream: When You Have to Close Your Church.” They are much appreciated.

There are two comments I need to make. First, the last three paragraphs of the article are a quote from Keepers of the Dream: On Closing a New Church Plant by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson (1985–2002 Ralph F. Wilson, all rights reserved; Web site: www.joyfulheart.com/plant/dream-keeper.htm). I’m not sure if I forgot to list that credit with the article when I sent it to you, or if the acknowledgement was omitted at your end.

Second, I am credited with pastoring the Poplar Springs Alliance Church in British Columbia, Canada. In fact, it is the Poplar Alliance Church in Manitoba. Again, thanks for printing this article. I pray it will be an encouragement.

—Les Kingdon, Manitoba, Canada.

This is just a brief note of biographical correction in the excellent article on this subject in your July 2004 issue. Foud was my associate, then my successor, as secretary of the Bible Lands Agency North of the American and British Bible Societies. Foud was not “a Muslim convert” (page 21, column A), but was reared in the Greek Orthodox church, as referred to on page 158 and on the back cover of his tremendously valuable book Building Bridges.

—Jim Weeks, via email.

I have enjoyed Ministry now for several years and am often encouraged and enlightened by its excellent articles. I seldom find reason for concern over an article in the magazine, even when I disagree with it (which is rare). However, I am writing my first letter to Ministry in response to Dr. Norman Gulley’s article “Is the Genesis Creation Account Literal?” (September 2004).

Although I do not possess scholarly expertise either in the Hebrew language or in the exegetical study of the Genesis creation account, I have done a fair amount of “amateur” and pastoral research into the various arguments and viewpoints surrounding the subject of origins. While I agree with Dr. Gulley in affirming God’s power as the explanation for the universe and all of creation, I find his insistence on interpreting the “days” of the Genesis account as literal 24-hour periods to not only weaken his argument considerably but to create a false tension between the Bible and science. Dr. Gulley writes “... for the Creation days were literal, continuous, contiguous, 24-hour periods of time.”

While I respect Dr. Gulley’s right to hold that view, I find it troubling that he expresses it so dogmatically, since there are other interpretations of the Genesis account which uphold the authority of Scripture while allowing for the validity of scientific observation (for excellent resources regarding this, visit Web sites such as www.reasons.org). Dr. Gulley’s approach to the creation account puts unnecessary strain on the faith of many Christians by forcing them between the rock of dogma and the hard place of scientific discovery, when such a stark and confusing choice is not necessary.

We in Christian leadership do a great disservice to those who look to us for spiritual guidance and clarity when we make dogmatic statements which the Scripture itself does not make. There is sufficient disagreement among biblical scholars and experts regarding such things as the meaning of the Genesis “days,” the age of the earth, and the age of the universe to show that Dr. Gulley should at least qualify his words or acknowledge alternative views. To do so would give readers opportunity to come to conclusions about such matters for themselves based on complete information—a process which builds solid, confident faith.

—Pastor Scott Little, Pendleton, Oregon.
There are times for every minister . . .

There are times for every minister when nothing seems to be going as it should; when the major—and minor—trends of our experience seem pervasively and permanently stuck; when, worst of all, that which has for some time been quietly crumbling around the edges now appears to be caving in and our most desperate efforts to turn our inner world around are filled with frustration.

Left alone, this sort of malady can become an inner fixture, difficult to uproot. It tends to take over our sense of ourselves, causing us to believe we aren’t worth much, or that we aren’t doing anything of particular value or significance. We can end up feeling we’ve lost our touch . . . as a preacher, a pastor, a soul winner, a leader, and this has inevitable repercussions in our personal life and relationships. In all this, we may well become oversensitive, paranoid, petulant, chronically reactive to others, and probably angry enough on the inside for it to show a bit on the outside.

There’s no easy answer to these struggles, especially when they’ve become ingrained or habitual ways of thinking and feeling. We’ll probably need to expend some time, significant clinging faith, and determined energy before we actually find ourselves wading out free of this “slough of despond.”

Part of the challenge is that many of us are impatient, believing that just a little effort should produce immediate rewards. As we know, however, some demons can be driven out only with prayer and fasting; and to quote the rest of the passage, “nothing else can [drive them out]” (Mark 9:29, TEV).

In other words, to find our way back may well involve walking up to our necks in the mud for much of the messy return journey. And this usually continues, it seems, without us even noticing that, after expending our efforts, the mud is no longer up to our necks but now only reaches to the chest, then the waist, and then to the knees. Finally, we realize in a flash of joy that we are on solid ground again.

We must each deal with God ourselves, as we search for a way out. We know that, but it’s nevertheless a liberating reality to remind ourselves of it. I don’t mean that no one else can help us (indeed, the help of trusted confidants or a mature spiritual friend may be crucial). I believe, though, that we are personally responsible for getting out of the slough. In other words, our healing is not up to some unpredictable force, fortune, or fellow, but up to our own grace-filled initiative and determination, through the indwelling Spirit. We cannot stand by passively hoping while we wait for someone else to find a way to pull us out.

I also believe it’s important to affirm, at least for the sake of my own soul, that the road back does not need to pass through the fields of psychology, or even theology. Various “…ologies” tend to overcomplicate our lives and can be deterrents to actual spiritual wholeness. The mountain pass over which we travel to wholeness is most truly, then, that which is ultimately called “the way, the truth and the life.” The way out calls for us to take a spiritual journey. Ironically, these are the things in which we ministers are experts.

Where may we start? What’s our first focus as we turn to leave our despondency? One biblical passage is genuinely sufficient in handling the essence of this question.

With the people of God in personal and corporate exile, separated from their deepest spiritual roots and realities, Jeremiah lays down this magnificent reassurance and challenge: “For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years have been completed . . . I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you—declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.’” (Jer. 29:10-13, NASB).

I believe deeply that those words and that promise, especially the closing declaration, apply beautifully to careworn Christian ministers no matter how oppressive their turmoil might be.
What makes churches grow? What recent Adventist research reveals

What factors need to be present for a local congregation to grow, and for the global body of Christ to develop and produce? Recent studies in North America suggest some interesting answers, and this article reports on what these studies revealed about this question.

Church growth is central to the life of the local church. A healthy, vital congregation is a growing congregation. This is also true when it comes to the church as a global organism. Creating a dynamic and appropriate witness in all nations, people groups, and communities is basic to the life of the church.

Research about church growth is not new among Seventh-day Adventists. Pioneering research by Gottfried Oosterwal in the early 1970s was published under the title Patterns of Seventh-day Adventist Church Growth in North America. Later, in 1981, a major study was conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, directed by Roger Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr. The results were published in Adventures in Church Growth.

The Dudley-Cummings study provided a widely accepted paradigm for outreach and church ministries in the Adventist Church. The study also broke ground in the field of church growth research across all faiths because it used sophisticated statistical tools to identify items correlated to growth in a random sample of local congregations. Most of the other literature on church growth is based only on anecdotal stories, case studies of exceptional churches, or correlations selected on the basis of a particular author's interests.

A major opportunity to update this research after two decades came when the Adventist Church decided to participate in the Faith Communities Today study (FACT), the largest interfaith study of congregational life ever conducted in the United States.

More than forty denominations and faiths participated, collecting a random sample of information from more than 18,000 local groups covering a wide range of topics. This article reports only data from the random sample of 412 Seventh-day Adventist churches in the U.S. that responded to the survey.

To see how the items correlating with church growth may have changed over the past two decades, key items from the 1981 study were included when the Adventist version of the FACT questionnaire was prepared. An analysis of the resulting data has been done that replicates the statistical methods used in the 1981 study. The results proved to be, in part, unexpected.

Measuring church growth

There are a number of ideas about how to measure church growth. The most common idea is to use the official membership of the congregation as reported to the local conference through the denomination's statistical reports.

Unfortunately, these numbers can be inflated by adding new members while not removing inactive members from the list. In some cases, local churches with significant growth in membership actually have a decline in the number of people attending worship and other church activities.

In recent years, worship attendance has become recognized as a much better measure of church growth and vitality than the factor of membership alone. A number of conferences began to require that local churches take a headcount during worship services and report this number along with other growth statistics, such as the number of baptisms. In 1988, the North American Division added headcounts to the denomination's official statistical reports, although only about half of local churches are following this new policy.

To do an analysis of church growth with the FACT data, it was first necessary to choose dependent variables that serve as indicators of growth in the statistical equations. Roger Dudley (research director for the project) and I selected four items for this purpose, based on different definitions of church growth:

(1) the number of regularly participating adults as a percentage of the book membership, which means that a higher percentage of active adults is equivalent to a growing church;

(2) the number of regularly participating youth as a percentage of book membership, which is the same as the first item but includes only teenagers and children;

(3) the change in the number of regularly participating adults over the last five years, which means that an increase in the attending adults equals a growing church; and

(4) the percentage of adult participants involved in activities outside of worship that strengthen their faith, an item that seeks to measure the qualitative aspect of church growth instead of just the increasing numbers in the congregation.

It is certainly possible to make a case for using other measures to better define church growth. In our analysis, of course, we are limited to the more than 200 items in the FACT data.
An index to growth potential

We used a statistical tool called “regression analysis” to construct an index of church growth indicators. In other words, this algorithm produces a cluster of items that, together, correlate most strongly with growing congregations.

We did not use all 200-plus items in the FACT data in running this analysis simply because of the overwhelming amount of information, much of it useless, that would result. We used as independent variables, or possible predictors of church growth, only items from the questionnaire related to worship, congregational identity, evangelistic outreach activity, community service, education, and growth. Included were the items that correlated to church growth using the same methods in the 1981 study.

The results of the regression analysis are displayed in tables 1 through 4. Of the 15 items displayed in the four regression clusters, the largest number, nearly half, are items that have to do with community involvement. Five of the 15 items are related to attitudes about church growth, including a few of the items that correlated in the 1981 study.

Three items touch on the spiritual and relational environment within the congregation. Only one item is from the long list of evangelistic activities included in the questionnaire. These results were surprising and initially difficult to believe.

I first shared these results with a group of Adventist Church administrators, and they suggested that we do an additional survey just to double-check our findings. They also recommended that we use several well-known lists of church growth indicators.

This additional survey was sponsored by the Columbia Union Conference and conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry in an eight-state region where the demographics duplicate the demographics of the Adventist Church throughout the United States. The additional study confirmed the FACT findings reported here.

A paradigm shift

There has been something of a paradigm shift in Adventist church growth over the last two decades. Community involvement and visibility have become key issues for church growth. The growing churches are those with significant, nontraditional community services and active relationships with the neighborhood, among other less dominant factors revealed in the study.

Intentionality is still as important as it was in the 1981 study, but spirituality has become even more important. The strongest single correlation factor is, this congregation strengthens the member’s relationship with God. And the most effective way to do public evangelism is through the worship service on Sabbath. This is the one item from the long list of evangelistic activities that correlated in the cluster analysis.

The strong evidence that community service is an essential element in church growth will be difficult for some Adventist pastors and administrators to accept. Frankly, I did not expect the results we obtained from the regression analysis.

Despite the fact that the founders of the Adventist movement were activists as well as evangelists, involved in the antislavery, temperance, health reform, and city mission movements of the time, many Adventist clergy today view community service as not our real mission and focus entirely on outreach that is shaped by traditional revivalism and traditional evangelistic methodologies.

The FACT data reveals what other studies have shown in recent years about Adventist congregations. They are all too often drive-in groups from outside the community where the church is located and have little meaningful contact with the community surrounding the local church structure. The regression analysis shows that this is a significant drag on church growth, and that the few congregations that are more community oriented are those most likely to be among the growing churches in the denomination.
Of course there are always exceptions. That is the nature of research results. It is possible for any reader to call to mind local churches that have significant growth and are involved entirely in conventional evangelism with little or no community service. But this is not the same thing as a random sample and a scientific analysis of specific items from hundreds of local churches.

It is important not to misunderstand the findings from this analysis. The community service involvements that correlate with church growth are not the usual activities that pastors often think of as community services. Emergency food distribution, “Dorcas” clothing programs, and health education classes were not among the items in the cluster.

Holistic, nontraditional community involvement

Nontraditional community services such as job-finding and job-training programs, weekly or daily hot meals for neighborhood senior citizens, homeless shelters, family counseling services, and substance-abuse programs are the kinds of things that correlate with church growth.

There is another way in which these findings are different from the traditional idea of community services. Church growth correlates with doing a good job of communicating with the community as well as actually providing certain kinds of services. Thus church growth is more likely to occur when a congregation has a visible role in the community and when its service activities are seen as community-based rather than the traditional church-based community service paradigm.

Yet another misreading must be avoided. We must not jump to the conclusion that the growing churches in this analysis focused entirely on community involvement at the expense of evangelism.

In reviewing the results of the study, it became clear that growing churches are very active in public evangelism, small group outreach, and personal evangelism. They are also very involved...
in community service. The declining churches are the ones that eschew community service and focus entirely on evangelism, or eschew evangelism and focus entirely on community service.

In fact, what this information provides is not so much a new paradigm as it is an old paradigm re-emerging from its lost place in the nineteenth century history of the Adventist Church. The data supports Ellen G. White’s paradigm for mission, which held that God wants a missionary strategy that includes social action as well as evangelism. “First meet the temporal necessities . . . and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion.” She did not favor an approach that focuses exclusively on proclamation. In fact, she wrote that preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls.

The role of social concern and public service in the mission of the Adventist Church is no more clearly stated than in The Ministry of Healing and reprinted in “many other places.” Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour, mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow me.”

The five-step outreach approach described in this passage has been extensively discussed but rarely acted upon. If it was completely understood and thoroughly implemented, it would change much of the current outreach

### Table 3: Regression Analysis of Increase in Number of Regularly Participating Adults in Previous Five Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>( R )</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Members are excited about the future of the church</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.199**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Congregations are spiritually vital and alive</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.210**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Special worship services are conducted for the unchurched such as Friend Day or seeker services</td>
<td>.488</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.128*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Members believe the local church has potential for growth</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.125*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Church sponsors a community service of family counseling services or telephone hotline</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.112*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Betas significant beyond the .01 level. *Betas significant beyond the .05 level.

That does not mean that a church that stops holding public meetings will have growth.

As noted above, what may be called a new kind of public evangelism does have a strong correlation to church growth worship services designed for the unchurched, including “seeker services” or special worship services aimed at nonmembers, such as Friendship Day.

There is also strong evidence in the FACT data that one of the most effective evangelistic methods in Adventist churches today is adding a second or additional worship service on Sabbath afternoon or Friday night. Fast-growing Adventist congregations are twice as likely to have two or more worship services, while declining and stable churches are more likely to have only one (see table 2).

What about the emerging relational approach to evangelism that is being adopted by an increasing number of Adventist churches? Specifically relational methods such as friendship evangelism and small group ministries did not correlate in the cluster analysis, although there is evidence that they are related to growth. Again, both growing and declining churches are almost equally likely to report that they encourage friendship evangelism and have small group ministries. Consequently, these items do not correlate strongly enough to be in the cluster.

### Table 4: Regression Analysis of Proportion of Regularly Participating Adults Involved in Activities Outside of Worship That Strengthen Their Faith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>( R )</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All church activities are coordinated to focus on church growth</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>-.209**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Church helps members deepen their relationship with God</td>
<td>.421</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Congregations welcome innovation and change</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Congregations preserve racial/ethnic/national heritage</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The local community is well-informed about church activities</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All betas significant beyond the .01 level**

Note: In Table 3, step 4, and Table 4, step 1, a minus beta indicates a positive relationship with the dependent variable because of the construction and coding of the items in the questionnaire. In both these tables the dependent variable is expressed as a minus number due to the construction and coding of the items in the questionnaire, so some items that indicate a positive relationship with a minus beta in Tables 1 and 2, indicate a positive relationship with a positive beta in Tables 3 and 4. Two items with an ambiguous statistical relationship have been removed from the tables.
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A relational approach to evangelism is a mirage that should now be dropped? No, it simply means that the relational approach appears to work for some congregations, while it does not produce much growth for other congregations.

The significant difference between these two groups is found in items in the cluster correlation: community service, spirituality, intentionality, and worship services designed for nonmembers.

In other words, no matter if your church is one that uses traditional methods of evangelism or one that is moving into a relational approach, it is equally important that your church get involved in community service, provide a strong spiritual experience for members, develop an intentional strategy for church growth, and have worship services (at least occasionally, or a second service) designed for nonmembers.

Spirituality and church growth

The strongest item in the cluster of church growth indicators is how well the congregation does in helping members deepen their relationship with God. This is strong evidence that spirituality is key to church growth. There is further evidence in other items that did not make it into the cluster of key indicators.

Congregations that place an emphasis on teaching spiritual disciplines are more likely to be growing churches (see table 3). This is true to a larger degree for the more spiritual disciplines than it is for those practices that relate more directly to health.

Spirituality cannot be ignored when church leaders seek expanding congregations. Any church growth strategy that is not bathed in prayer and does not emerge with the guidance of the Holy Spirit cannot be expected to attain authentic, lasting growth.

Despite the importance of spirituality, it is a mistake to conclude that because spirituality is crucial to growth, a congregation will grow if it ignores the question of growth and focuses entirely on spirituality. The New Testament clearly gives specific attention to numerical growth (John 17:20; Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4; 5:14), and the FACT data indicate that growing churches focus intentionally on growth.

Three items in the cluster analysis are specifically about being intentional. Growing congregations are more likely to believe in their potential for growth, to welcome innovation and change, and to focus every phase of church activity on growth.

Two other items in the cluster relate to positive attitudes among the members. The members of growing churches are more likely to be excited about the future of their congregation and to describe their church as spiritually vital and alive.

There is further evidence of the importance of intentionality among items that did not make it into the cluster of key indicators. Local churches that adopt goals for growth are more likely to be growing churches. Congregations that quickly make follow-up contacts with newcomers who attend worship are more likely to be growing churches.

Conflict in the congregation seems to distract from growth. Among Adventist churches, the growing congregations are significantly less likely to report significant conflict. This is surprising because the interfaith FACT data indicate that most religious congregations that report growth also have higher levels of conflict. In fact, many experts claim that healthy resistance is a necessary element of growth.
Church growth and pastoral staffing

Growing Adventist congregations are more likely to have less turnover and longer tenure among their pastors (see table 4). The statistical relationship is significant but not strong. This may be evidence that long-term pastors are key to growth in some sectors of the church and not as important in other settings. Further analysis is needed to pin down the precise factors involved in this widely discussed question.

The same is true about funding to increase local church staff. Growing churches are more likely to budget funds for church staff, while declining churches are more likely not to provide funds for this purpose. Again, the statistical relationship is significant but not strong. Until further study is completed, it is impossible to know if added pastoral staffing is relevant for some types of congregations, while counterproductive in other kinds.

More important is the fact that growing churches spend more money on local mission work than do declining churches. Nearly half of the growing Adventist congregations spend $5,000 or more each year on local outreach ministries, while more than four out of five of the declining congregations spend less than that. Many declining churches spend less than $1,000 a year on local outreach.

Bottom line

What works for Adventist church growth today is a congregation that gets involved constructively in its local community, providing significant services outside of its own self-interest, as well as providing a growing spiritual experience for its members and becoming intentional about a strategy for growth. The most effective arena for public evangelism is worship services designed for the unchurched.

It is wrong for a local church to conclude that if it stops doing conventional public evangelism, and such outreach activities such as Revelation seminars or Bible studies...and begins to concentrate on community services projects, that they will begin to grow. These tried-and-true soul-winning methods enhance the process in most growing congregations. At the same time, these methods by themselves cannot be expected to produce growth.

There are other details that may serve to fine-tune an effective church growth strategy. These include a relational approach to evangelism, increased resources and pastoral staffing, as well as reduced internal conflict. These factors need careful attention, but they do not yet have the strong correlation to church growth that is present in the combination of community service, spirituality, intentionality, and worship services designed for nonmembers.

Monte Sahlin, D.Min., is vice president for creative ministries at the Columbia Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Columbia, Maryland. An important collaborator in this research is Roger Dudley, director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, who serves as research director for the Adventist segment of Faith Communities Today (FACT).

3 A complete report of the FACT survey has been published in Faith Communities Today: A Report on Religion in the United States Today by Carl S. Dudley and David A. Ruckman (Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford, 2001). The full report of the Adventist segment of the FACT study has been published in Adventist Congregations Today by Monte Sahlin (Center for Creative Ministry, Lincoln, 2003). Information from both studies is also available on the Internet at www.fact.hartsem.edu and www.creativeministry.org/research/FACT.
4 Specifically, we used the following questions from the FACT questionnaire: i.1.1 through R, iil.5 through J, ii.6 through Q, and iii.8 through iii.11. You can see the original questionnaire at the Web sites noted above.
5 The items used included George Barna’s eight characteristics of growing churches, the Natural Church Development (NCD) list, and the cluster of items correlated to church growth in the 1981 study. Paul Richards and I also decided to include indicators from a study that we conducted for the Pacific Union Conference, which looked at a selected set of congregations in California and Arizona with a documented reputation for winning and holding younger generations. (See Reaching New Generations by Monte Sahlin, Paul Richards, and Carole Luke Kilcher, 1998, Center for Creative Ministry.
6 A report of the supplemental survey can be found at www.creativeministry.org/research.
8 ——, Review & Herald, August 82, 1899.
Fallen pastors: redemptive responses

Editor's Note: This is the sixth part of Ministry's eight-part series on clergy sexual wrongdoing. This article should not be considered the official word on how to deal with "fallen pastors," nor should it be seen as a prescription delineating exactly how pastoral infidelity should be handled. Instead the article should be seen as a thoughtful, comprehensive, authoritative description of how one might handle situations in which pastors have become embroiled in an illicit sexual situation. The two final articles in this series will appear in Ministry's January and March 2005 issues.

So far we have looked at biblical concepts of ministry, sexuality, and the unique nature of sexual sin. We have exposed biblical patterns for dealing with pastors' infidelities and with the wounds inflicted on the many victims of such behavior. We must now look at the most prudent and redemptive responses to clergy sexual misconduct.

What now?

Sexual involvement with parishioners is a breach of the pastoral code of ethics, an injury to the good name of Christian ministry, a blow to the power of the gospel, a scandal when it comes to those who submit to temptation, and a proponent of moral expediency. Biblical and theological content becomes God's remote "ideal," and as such, irrelevant to "real" issues. Lifestyle and administrative procedures are divorced from the truth we profess. Here the question cries out for a truthful answer: Is theology for real, or is it just a remote "ideal"? A minister's infidelity requires healing, and healing love is a painful love, and always a principle one.

2. The ostrich game. Urged to hide, to mask, to cover up, we move the pastor to another place of work. But the problem does not disappear. On moral issues, indecision is always a decision. To do nothing about consequences, little about reoccurrence of abuse; to gloss over the causes of infidelity; or to forget the victims emboldens the perpetrators and punishes further the innocent.

In her book Is Nothing Sacred? Marie Fortune shows why it took over four years and the downfall of several women to halt Pastor Donovan's "sex-plots." She has much to say about the church's myopia and the keeping of "church family" secrets.

3. The double standard game has a theological mask. In reaction to the "blame game," we soften the demands of the gospel and act, in fact, from expediency. Biblical and theological content becomes God's remote "ideal," and is, as such, irrelevant to "real" issues. Lifestyle and administrative procedures are divorced from the truth we profess. Here the question cries out for a truthful answer: Is theology for real, or is it just a remote "ideal"? A minister's infidelity requires healing, and healing love is a painful love, and always a principle one.

4. The "first stone" game. In John 8:7, Jesus challenges the accusers of the woman caught in adultery: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (RSV). In this game, the questions are posed with this slant: Now, since adultery easily assails our minds too, how dare we correct others? When the question is simply asked this way, many tend to hold back when true discipline needs to be administered.

Yet to his church, the Master gives a basic assignment: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22, 23, RSV). There is no way out of this duty. The church's authority is based on her Master's command and His standard, not the church's; His unfailing care, not the church's fallible ways; His Spirit's power to heal, not the church's eagerness to correct.

5. The it's-personal-and-private game. Why not bring reconciliation and forgiveness through a confrontation (Matt. 18)? Grenz and Bell offer some cautions. First, in this passage Jesus addresses personal, private matters. He "instructs us what we should do when we feel personally wronged by another believer. "Clergy sexual misconduct, however, is never merely a private matter, even though it includes a personal dimension." Second, in Matthew 18, Jesus speaks of two members who share a peer relationship. But a minister is a powerful person, and the other woman is not.

Third, "requiring that a congregant confront her victimizer as the first step, can actually work against Jesus' desire that victims receive justice." Thus a female victim (and certainly a child) may have the most serious difficulty confronting the pastor alone or even in what may be deemed by some to be an appropriately private setting, that may in fact be arranged to "keep things quiet," or under the auspices of "handling the situation discreetly."
In Marie Fortune’s book, Pastor Donovan used such confrontations or such settings to shift all the responsibility onto his victims.

Healing the wounded and shielding the vulnerable is foundational to the task facing the church—nothing less. No responsible, loving Christian would say “just forgive, and go on with life.” Even though forgiveness is part and parcel of God’s and our relationship with any sinner, when a pastor commits adultery with a parishioner, such an act requires more than the ordinary, and forgiveness is but a part of healing. The commission given in John 20:23 locates the church’s loving response to sin with complete confidentiality.

2. Comments on Preliminary Process
   a. A Designated Officer, charged to initiate the full preliminary hearing procedure, may want to be accompanied by a person(s) of the other gender to facilitate conversations with the accuser and the accused, to preclude intimidation or charges of bias.
   b. Hearing the accuser. If the accuser is the “other woman,” it is advisable to remember that “her chief concerns are simple: Am I being heard? Do they believe me? Do they blame me? Will they side with their pastor?” The interviewer(s), regardless of how shocked they may be at the accusations, must refrain from “shooting the messenger.”
   c. Assess the damage and needs. This takes real courage. No two cases of adultery are identical. Every person will react in their unique way, and the immediate needs will vary. Respond to actual, personal needs.
   d. Stop the “bleeding.” The truth must be told if a proper assessment of the situation is to take place. Focus your care on the most acute pain and traumatic reaction. Yet no one should be overlooked. Involve an expert as soon as possible. Listen, observe, encourage, cry, bear with outbursts of anger, empathize with fear, share the shame, and be there.
   e. Care for chores and daily needs. Children need play and laughter, they must eat, hear a bedtime story, go to school. Moreover, the lawn may need attention, laundry done . . .
   f. Keep on caring for as long as needed. Years perhaps. All this must happen in complete confidentiality.

Painful love
   1. Emergency response of friends. When sexual infidelity happens, the tragedy might not show. The heart bleeds, the lungs scream, but fear, embarrassment, and bewilderment muffie the unsightly tears, the contorted face of hurt and shame. The “May I be of help?” will too often be met with a “No, thanks.” But if you are a friend, be available (Prov. 17:17).
      a. First, PRAY as never before. Every step, move, and gesture counts now.
      b. Close cooperation between the local church and the conference or the corporate church administrative body at this early stage is essential. Everyone involved or affected by a pastor’s infidelity is a part of both the church and the conference. Both entities need to minister to all, because both entities will ultimately administer discipline, and true love does not wait until discipline is meted out.
      c. Assess the damage and needs. This takes real courage. No two cases of adultery are identical. Every person will react in their unique way, and the immediate needs will vary. Respond to actual, personal needs.
      d. Stop the “bleeding.” The truth must be told if a proper assessment of the situation is to take place. Focus your care on the most acute pain and traumatic reaction. Yet no one should be
be written out and given to the
Designated Officer.

If the evidence yields no grounds for
allegations, the church should take
steps against malicious gossip. It will
also examine the relationship between
the pastor and the other woman to
make sure that nothing in their conduct
creates the rumors.

After preliminary hearings, the
"Designated Officer shall immediately
begin the process of selecting the five-
member Sexual Ethics Committee
(SEC)," thus initiating the Investigative
Process. 10

The emergency response in place, and
the preliminary hearing completed,
with written documents in hand, the
SEC "shall investigate fully the allega-
tions and documentation from the
accuser, the accused, and other appro-
priate sources." 11

a. Suspension. A potentially credible
allegation of pastoral adultery is a seri-
ous charge. Inquiry about a minister's
integrity raises the question of his posi-
tion. An immediate leave of absence
from pastoral duties will ease the minis-
ter's stress until the issue is resolved. The
conference will handle the details of
such a suspension.

b. Engaging a consultant. Because of
the complexity and seriousness of the
issues, the church might do well to
engage a consultant(s) who has good
professional knowledge of sexual issues
and legal implications, and at the same
time is familiar with the life of the
church. 12

Healing love
From this point on, the findings of
the SEC may lead in many directions. In
the case of a lesser offense, like sexual
harassment, the pastor must submit to
a program of supervision and discipline.
His repentance, his willingness to
amend his ways and mend his relation-
ships at any cost, may bring hope for
healing. However, no one is to take for
granted the pastor's wife and the other
woman's husband.

When the charge of adultery is con-
firmed, both the local church board and
the discipline committee of the confer-
ence will follow biblical teachings on
the matter. But healing love is nothing
like romantic permissiveness or cold
condemnation. It is one of the most dif-
ficult experiences under the sun, the
most demanding form of therapy. It
may take the form of a most exacting
gentleness. Beyond the act alone, it
endeavors to equip the sinner to take
hold of God's grace, to manage conse-
quences responsibly, to overcome
habits, and to become a "safe male." 13

Withdrawal of ordination
In the case of adultery, the commit-
tee has few options but to recommend
the withdrawal of ordination and the
removal of the pastor from his position.
In fact, moved by deep repentance, the
pastor himself may request as much.
Several reasons explain such a course of
action.

1. Hit-and-run behavior is a crime.
True peace comes from a quiet con-
science, born of awareness that all is
done, all in time and energies, to repair
the damage left behind. An honest per-
son can do no less. The damage and
pain are his consequences, and he must
invest himself to restore the injured.

2. Rebuilding of the pastor's marriage
innocence is another monumental task.
His wife trusted him implicitly, sacrificed
for him, took on more than her share of
duties so that he could do the work to
which he had been called, and all this,
so she has now discovered, while he
was in alliance with another woman
and with the enemy of his soul and
marriage. He will have to regain his
wife's trust and her heart. Adultery is a
sin in action, not in words. It will require
action to bring healing; words have
their place but are insufficient here.

3. Distress due to change of identity.
The pastor is not just a public official like
David was. As seen in the first essay of
this series (see Ministry, January 2004),
the pastor's identity encapsulates sev-
eral biblical images. All his roles as
shepherd, priest, teacher, and prophet,
are now gambled away, and his new
identity as "lover" is sham and mockery.
For a while he lived in a fantasyland,
but now his eyes must adjust to the
grim reality of the loss of personal and
professional innocence. Those who
have not experienced the identity-
changing power of sexual infidelity
must beware of treating it lightly. Paul
commands, "Flee immorality" (1 Cor.
6:18, NASB).

4. The pastor needs time to mend his
home, time to restore his children’s trust in him, in themselves, and in God. “Do not say it is impossible for you to overcome. Do not say, ‘it is my nature to do thus and so, and I cannot do otherwise. I have inherited weaknesses that make me powerless before temptation.’ We know you cannot overcome in your own strength; but help has been laid upon the One who is mighty to save.” 14

5. The pastor needs time, courage, and divine wisdom to help save the other woman’s marriage. The other husband may need to hear from his mouth a heartfelt apology and the assumption of the major part of responsibility for what happened due to his position of power, though any attempt to do so should be carefully and prayerfully considered before it is attempted.

6. The other woman needs restoration. An apology in the presence of the other woman’s husband may be the first important step. She should be assured that, by God’s grace, nothing will happen against between them.

7. Then there is yet another woman, the virgin bride of Jesus Christ, whom He entrusted into the hands of His undershepherds. She is wounded, shamed in public. Forgetting his disgrace, the pastor will do whatever is needed to bring healing and to restore her reputation in the eyes of the watching world. The church is God’s dearest object on earth, 15 and her soon coming is the major part of responsibility for what happened due to his position of power, though any attempt to do so should be carefully and prayerfully considered before it is attempted.

8. Establish an office of “moral integrity” in ministry at as many levels of our church organization as possible. Moral issues should include, but are not limited to, sexual issues.

From colleague to colleague
We ministers of the gospel must become closer friends. If we do not watch out and care for each other, who will? Who will intercede for our safety? God needs men and women whom He can send to me “if there be any wicked way in me . . .” so God may “lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:24, RSV).

But what can we do? How can we cooperate with God so that He can lead us out of a potentially illicit relationship?
1. Stop cold turkey, while friends and colleagues fast and pray.
2. “Once the decision has been made to end the affair, there must be a final goodbye. No more discussions about what went wrong, no more attempts to be “just friends,” no more brief phone calls for just a little advice. No more contacts.” 16
3. If a pastor works with someone who might be a temptation to him or her, that is the time to “flee immorality.” Either the pastor or the “other person” must find another workplace. This is the proper time for a transfer.

What can a pastor do to get out of an actual illicit relationship?
2. Take a hard look at your situation. See the slippery slope. See how many are sliding, and how many try unsuccessfully to climb back. Only the way to our Father is not slippery (Luke 15:18, 19).
3. Your “lover” holds your future, the future of your innocent family, the future of your ministry in her hands. Is that good? Has she been tested in any fire of life, or only in the fire of passion and romance? Give your life to God.

Come to your Father and say in repentance and humility: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21, RSV).

Read aloud Psalm 51, a psalm of David’s repentance. Yearn for peace, for purity, for innocence.

4. Then, as God provides His grace, face your wife. Tell her the truth. She, who stood by you; she, the mother of your children; she, the wife of your youth, is she not more trustworthy than your lover? Tested and tried with you in real-life hardships, she might be ready to stand by you even now. This is another action that needs to be entered into prayerfully and thoughtfully.

5. Be ready to give up anything—job, reputation, projects, and plans—to put your life back in order. Chances are that, this way, you may contain the damage and facilitate healing.

6. Consider seriously with your wife a

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God’s presence in the sanctuary: A theology of His nearness

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez

Adventists view His work in a holistic way as including His incarnation, earthly ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, His high-priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and His return in glory. Christ is depicted as High Priest, Sacrifice, Savior, Mediator, and Judge. The theology of the sanctuary addresses both historical and theological concerns. In this article we will primarily deal with an aspect of its theological content, but first a word about its historical value.

Historical contribution
This article of faith is directly connected with the apocalyptic prophecy of Daniel 7 and 8 and the historical rise of the Adventist movement. This perspective claims that through the prophecies of Daniel and others, God was intentionally describing an important event in salvation history that was to take place at the end of the 2,300 years mentioned in Daniel 8:14. At that time the cleansing of the heavenly temple was to begin. This cleansing was to take place through Christ’s work of judgment in the heavenly temple, leading to the parousia and the final resolution of the sin problem.

Meanwhile, here on earth God was raising a movement of restoration and reform whose particular goal was to prepare humanity for the return of Christ in glory through the proclamation of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12. The historical significance of the doctrine of the sanctuary is not something that should be ignored or considered a fossilized result of the apocalyptic prophecies having little or no relevance for us today.

The prophecy is disturbing to some modern readers because the prophet had the imprudence, the audacity, or, perhaps better, the naivety to predict an event that was to take place 2,300 years later (457 BC-1844 AD). One can easily understand how this could be a stumbling block for many in the contemporary world. The historical contribution of the doctrine of the sanctuary is directly connected to the self-identity of the Adventist movement, its message, and its mission, and has been reaffirmed on exegetical and theological grounds.¹

Theological content
From a theological perspective the biblical doctrine of the sanctuary addresses, among other theological themes, a fundamental biblical and existential concern that has disturbed humans for centuries, namely the phenomenon of the nearness of God. It has disturbed humans because what we seem to experience is not so much His nearness but His distance or absence. The social world in which we live is characterized by conflicts, prejudices, loneliness, and individualism. The message of the sanctuary reaches us in a world in which personal interrelatedness and nearness are agonizing. It reassures us that, even in the midst of chaos, God is very near us.

The topic of the presence and nearness of God is located at the core of the biblical theology of the sanctuary and engulfs biblical theology from beginning to end. It could easily function as a...
unifying and integrating theological theme. It flows from creation through soteriology and eschatology to the consummation of salvation in re-creation.

Creation and the nearness of God

Creation is God's first work "outside" the circle of inter-Trinitarian relationships. This new divine task refers to a work that takes place in the realm of nothingness out of which God, in an effortless way, brought into existence the universe and the diversity of elements that compose it. The spoken word mediated the act of creation (Ps. 33:6).

Since creation takes place outside God, there is, by nature, a distance between God and His creation. This idea is emphasized in the Bible through the concept of the incomparability of God. Isaiah quoted the Lord saying, "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? . . . Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:5, 9, NIV; cf. 45:5, 6).

Since everything there is belongs to the category of the created, there is nothing and no one within the universe who is like the Creator. He is indeed unique. The distance between Him and His creation is radically affirmed when it is categorically stated that the "heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you" (1 Kings 8:27, NIV).

That is to say, creation cannot circumscribe God because He is by nature the transcendent Creator whose mode of existence is fundamentally, even essentially, different from that of His creatures. The universe and creation are not God's natural dwelling. This raises the important question of the nature of God's presence within His creation.

The doctrine of the sanctuary reveals that our transcendent God chose to be near His creatures, to dwell among them. This simple theological insight rules out the philosophical option of deism that argues for a distant God who abandoned His creation and left it to be governed by impersonal laws. It also rejects pantheism that depicts God's presence within creation not as nearness but as embedded in creation to the extent that the divine impersonal essence permeates everything there is.

The biblical God is a personal God who, in an act of condescension, localized Himself within His creation to have fellowship with His self-conscious intelligent creatures. The psalmist assures us that the "Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne" (11:4, NIV). The Incomparable One "established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19, NIV). That throne "was established long ago" (93:2, NIV).

God's localized presence within the space of His creatures is a unique fragment of space in the universe. It is a space within which God makes Himself accessible to His creatures; it assures intelligent life throughout the cosmos that God is indeed near. But His localized presence does not limit or restrict Him to a particular place.

It is precisely because He is dwelling at a particular locale within creation that His presence is felt throughout the totality of the universe. He said to the Israelites, "'Am I only a God nearby,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?'" (Jer. 23:23, 24, NIV).

Nothing, absolutely nothing, takes place in the universe outside God's presence. The personal God who dwells in the heavenly temple at the same time rules from there over the totality of the space inhabited by His creatures (Ps. 139:7-16).

This unique and sublime fragment of space is the administrative center of the universe from which the Lord "rules over all" (103:19, NIV). It is the central place for heavenly creatures to worship the Lord and be instructed by Him (103:19-22). It is also there that the heavenly council meets with the Lord (89:5, 6; cf. Job 1:6). It is fundamentally a sacred space of meeting or encounter between God and His creation, a reference point that orients all other spaces.

The heavenly family knows where God has localized Himself, where His immediate presence can be experienced. The nearness of God is real and visible in the heavenly temple. It was God's love that moved Him to be close and very near to those He loved. That nearness was also indispensable because creation is by nature finite; it cannot sustain itself. God's nearness was the means through which His sus-
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The incomprehensible aspect of God's anguish for nearness to us is that He localized the fullness of His presence in a human being, Jesus (Col. 1:19). This is optimal accessibility and nearness!

It may be difficult for some to acknowledge that God dwells in a real heavenly temple, but it is much more difficult to imagine Him fully localized in the person of a human being, namely in Jesus. In Him the divine and the human were bonded together revealing an unbreakable nearness of God to humans. Access to God's glorious nearness in His heavenly temple was now possible exclusively through Jesus (John 14:1-3; Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 7:25). The parabolic nature and function of the earthly sanctuary came to an end when "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14, NIV).

**Restoring the divine nearness**

How was the divine nearness restored to rebellious human beings? The distance created by sin was real and would have been permanent had it not been for Christ's reconciling act of salvation. Since the Fall God illustrated for us through the sacrificial system how He would bring humans back to nearness to Him. The sacrificial victims bore the sin of the repentant sinners, experiencing the ultimate distance from God through death, while the sinner experienced the nearness of God through forgiveness. God in His sanctuary was, through His forgiving grace, assuming responsibility for the sins of repentant humans, finding a way of allowing them to remain in His presence (Exod. 34:5-7).

The typological significance of the sacrificial system found its fulfillment in the death of Christ. He bore our sins on the cross, thus experiencing the absolute distance from God that we all deserve. Christ's agonizing question, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46, NIV), raised in a unique way God's need for nearness.

The cost of our redemption was paid by God Himself when the Godhead experienced separation, the voluntary pulling apart of One of the members of the Trinity. There was unity, but unity in
suffering and distance. Thus God's nearness to us was possible, because God was in Christ experiencing our eternal suffering and distance. Thus God's nearness to the totality of the cosmos has been restored to the human race through Christ. He ascended to the Father and sat down at His right hand (Heb. 8:1, 2). This is the closest anyone could be to God.

Equally important is the fact that no other person can bring us closer to the Father than Jesus because He is the Son of God (5:5). As Son He is constantly in His immediate presence, and since He is our Mediator we participate in that same privilege through Him. Without Christ's nearness to God as Mediator in the heavenly temple the fullness of the benefits of the Cross will be inaccessible to us. It is through Him that the atoning power of the Cross continues to be effective in our lives and in the lives of those who are constantly surrendering themselves to Jesus (1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2).

Through His work in the heavenly temple, the nearness of God continues to sustain the universe (Col. 1:17), to preserve it in spite of the presence of evil, and provides for us access to the very throne of God (Heb. 4:15, 16). Through it we experience the nearness of God in moments of existential turmoil (Heb. 4:16; Ps. 34:19).

Eschatology and the consummation of God's nearness

Christ's mediation in the heavenly sanctuary plays a central role in bringing the cosmic conflict to an end by transforming the Christian hope into a glorious reality. His work of reconciliation was typified through the daily ministry of the Old Testament priesthood and His work of judgment through the services of the Day of Atonement.

The apocalyptic book of Daniel announced a human attempt to usurp the mediation of Christ and with it the free access and nearness to God that Christ obtained for us (8:9-12). This happened through the institution of a false system of mediation within the church itself. The same prophecy pointed to the time when such usurpation was to be unmasked through the proclamation of Christ's high-priestly ministry as the only and exclusive way of access to God in His heavenly dwelling (8:13, 14).

Daniel uses the typology of the Day of Atonement to describe the consummation of God's redemptive work in Christ. The heavenly temple is the place where God has been dealing with the people and the extermination of the evil power that upset the cosmic order and the original nearness established by God with His children in the beginning. The kingdom, handed over by God to the Son of Man, belongs now to Him and to His people.

The nearness of God in final judgment

God's nearness in judgment is possibly one of the most important images used in the Bible to describe the consummation of God's redemptive work. In the resolution of the sin problem, one of the most important aspects is not its extermination but the recognition by all the parties involved that the extermination is indispensable and justifiable. Everyone is to be fully and absolutely persuaded that this is the right decision in the cosmic struggle. The destruction of evil is not just God's decision but the decision of each creature including those who will be deleted from the universe. This will be accomplished through the pre-Advent (Dan. 7:9, 10, 26, 27; Rom. 2:5), the millennial (Rev. 20:4), and the post-millennial judgment (20:11-15), that is to say, the final judgment.

In the visions of Daniel, judgment, cleansing, and deliverance are inseparable. This cluster of ideas is found in Daniel's second dream (Dan. 8). He addresses the topic of salvation using a term in which legal, cultic, and soteriological ideas interact—the Hebrew verb *tsadaq*, "be right, be just" (cf. Isa. 53:11).

Through the ideology of the Day of Atonement, Daniel is informed that the original cosmic order or nearness will be

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**THEN THE NEARNESS OF GOD TO HIS CREATURES WILL MANIFEST ITSELF THROUGH THE ESCHAOTOLOGICAL JUDGMENT.**

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restored through judgment, vindication, and cleansing. The military images are left behind and a new image is used to define that from which the universe needs to be delivered: uncleanness, separation from God.

This brings the issue of salvation home to a personal level, because it insinuates that we are unclean and have therefore become distant from God. The threat to God’s people is no longer an external attack from enemy forces but an internal condition that threatens the enjoyment of the nearness of God.

The consummation of the cleansing of God’s people and of the universe through the final judgment will result in the restoration of cosmic harmony; God’s permanent nearness and accessibility to His creatures. Daniel’s dream in chapter 8 is pointing to that glorious event which happens to be, under God’s providence, the very goal of the plan of redemption and of human history.

Christian eschatology has always anticipated the beatific vision of God, the permanent enjoyment of God’s immediate presence by the redeemed ones (Matt. 5:8). At that moment, God’s nearness will be experienced in a new, personal way, merging visibility with permanent accessibility. The Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary proclaims and joyfully anticipates that moment (Rev. 21:3, 4).


If you take resolute steps to flee immorality, don’t be surprised:

† If you start off strong, but your resolve weakens quickly.
† If fear becomes a constant companion. Consider alternatives. Consider also your Father’s, and your wife’s, embrace (Luke 15:20-24).
† If you need to, act out of sheer obedience. Act as if you have a victory. “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11, RSV, emphasis mine).
† If temptations intensify (James 1:13-15) and opportunities for sin increase, flee!

“None of these things will prevent immorality [only God’s grace can]. They may encourage you, however, to stay on the right path. They will be strong, positive influences. God does use His people in the lives of others to help change them. Be open to Him to provide support through others, and also through His Word, His Spirit and the written words of other believers.”

Fallen pastors

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visit to one of many retreat centers for specialized, professional treatment. By God’s help you will recapture the dream of your first love.

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The shaping of the emerging church (part 2)

**Editor's Note:** The first part of this two-part series appeared in Ministry's September issue. This second part attempts to express some of the practical implications and applications of that presented in the first.

The church today has, by and large, forgotten that it is not synonymous with the kingdom of God. We have spoken of “growing the church” and “building the kingdom” as though they were the same thing. But the kingdom of God is much more than the church and cannot be contained by it or in it.

The most urgent question the emerging church should now face is one that strikes at the heart of its very existence: What is the role of the church with respect to the gospel? Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, NIV). In this passage, we are called to bear witness to the present reality of the reign of God—among us here and now and extending into eternity. This was manifested definitively in the epochal arrival of Jesus the first time and will be climactically exposed when the full manifestation of the kingdom comes when Jesus arrives the second time.

In the meantime, we as the body of Christ are the visible representatives, or “ambassadors,” as Paul put it, of the good news of the kingdom of heaven (2 Cor. 5:20).

Darrell Guder says, “The church of Jesus Christ is not the purpose or goal of the gospel, but rather its instrument and witness.” We have structured our ministries as though the gospel’s purpose was to serve the church. We talk as though the church is the point. But the church itself is not the point. Instead, the good news of God’s reign is the main point, and the church is the organism that embodies, serves, and proclaims the reality of the gospel, even though the church would never have existed had it not been for the gospel.

**Threefold ministry of the emerging church**

The first practice of the emerging church is to embody the truth of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom. It should be a foretaste of the kingdom, a living demonstration of what the kingdom is like. One striking feature of the emerging church is its commitment to being the community of God’s presence in the world. Thus it is called “the body of Christ.”

Before we say or do anything, we, as the church, minister the reign of God to our world by simply becoming healing communities of God’s reconciling love, even as Jesus Christ was. We exist to demonstrate and to live our faith, not merely to proclaim it. Nothing speaks more loudly or persuasively than people who live their lives together in kingdom relationships, preferring one another over themselves, forgiving one another, giving to one another as each has need, laying down their lives for their friends.

Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35, NIV).

The second practice of the emerging church is to serve in God’s kingdom, showing the world the nature of His kingdom. God’s purpose, from the time He called Abraham, has been that His people would be a blessing to the world (see Gen. 12:1-3; 1 Peter 2:9-12). Jesus came, proclaiming that the kingdom had come. He then commenced His life of healing, forgiving, and simply serving people.

Jesus spent more time healing than preaching. Why? Because He was here to teach about His Father’s kingdom, and the best way He could do that was to be a living demonstration of what that was like. So today, whenever the people of God go beyond proclamation to alleviate the suffering of His creation, the kingdom of God is made visible. We give
witness to the reality of the kingdom by our acts of wise love and mercy.

We, the church, are ambassadors of the kingdom when we, in addition to proclamation, seek justice for the oppressed and healing for the broken.

The third practice of the emerging church is to speak on God's behalf, telling the world who God is and that His plan is to restore His creation. Just as Jesus proclaimed the gospel, so we must proclaim, with our mouths, that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:11-14). By speaking, we clarify for the world what we mean by how we live and what we do.

Traditionally, we've been better at proclaiming than becoming and doing. Proclamation alone is not sufficient. It will never achieve the goal by itself. Our community or lack of community, our good deeds or lack of good deeds, betray or illustrate our words.

If all we do is tell the world about the kingdom of God, we have in fact said very little. We even may have made things worse. It is probably better for the world to remain in ignorance than to experience the witness of words that are contradicted by our actions or robbed of their meaning by our lack of congruous action.

This understanding of the church as missionary-called and sent to bear witness to God's loving reign, both now and in the future-has profound implications for how we view conversion, church membership, apologetics, evangelism, and especially discipleship.

Further, this new missionary context, this more living view of the church, forces us to rethink our role in society. We need to look at how the changing world requires a rehearing of the gospel and see that this rehearing gives life to the emerging church and points to three primary contours of that emerging church: to embody, to serve, and to proclaim the reality of God's present reign among us.

Let's take yet a closer and more practical look at the contours of the threefold ministry we have already discussed.

Be the message

Again, the first calling of the church in this new missionary and eschatological context is to be something—something peculiar and beautiful, something powerful and significant. The church must be the community of God's presence in the world. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." By this He inferred that we are a watched people—"a city on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:14, NIV). The emerging church is renewing the notion that faith is far from being a private matter; it is a matter of public witness. Again, the genuineness of our claim to be followers of Jesus is verified only by our practice of love for each other (John 13:35). Jesus prayed that Christians would be united in oneness with each other in the same way He is united with His Father. But this oneness is not just for our personal happiness. It has a missiological purpose—"that the world may believe" that Jesus was sent by God the Father (John 17:21, NIV).

Therefore, learning to live lives of grace, forgiveness, and service is central to the church's mission. Spending time in fellowship; caring for one another's needs; loving one another across social barriers of age, gender, and race; is mission.

Thus it is especially sad when churches experience all the dysfunction they do. Harsh words are spoken, revenge is sought, grudges are held, and battle lines are drawn. In many churches there are groups of people who haven't spoken to each other in years because something was said in haste and frustration. Cliques form along class and racial lines. Aminosities develop between different age groups over their vision of what the church should be.

There is nothing new about this. There may have been a time when churches could survive on logical teaching even if the church family was toxic. But now, our world is more attuned to truth that is transmitted culturally, through life experience, and not just verbally or in print.

The emerging church understands that an adequate defense of the faith will come from and actually depends upon a visible demonstration of the gospel embodied in the faith community and not from mere words and clever, logical, or even scriptural arguments. The alternative way of life that the church embodies is the church's greatest apologetic.

That's why the first part of my church's mission is to be a "healing community." We have found that the more we ask ourselves what that looks like and seek to live it, the more God draws people to us. As we look back over the dozens of people who have joined our community in the past couple of years, we ask ourselves, "Where did these people come from?"

Frankly, in many cases, we have no idea! We didn't advertise to them, we didn't knock on their door, they didn't see a piece of literature. They just showed up one day. Why? Our suspicion is that God is working in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in our area whom He would love to expose to a safe, authentic community of faith; one that is a living demonstration of the redemptive relationship He seeks with us.

Could it be that He has a hard time finding a good place to lead them? So the minute a church decides it wants to reflect, even embody, the character of Christ by the way it lives its collective life, God is right there leading people from who-knows-where into its midst.

For us it is an issue of stewardship. Are we going to be stewards of the witness God has given us? As soon as we decide we will and act to remove the human obstacles to the visibility of God's kingdom, God will lead people to the church.

Do the message

After we have made an effort to be the message we must do the message. The One who said, "You are the light of the world," also said, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13, NIV). Jesus also added that salt that has lost its
saltiness is good for nothing. Churches that take seriously this second calling of the emerging church find themselves a blessing to the world.

The current missionary challenge the church faces is this: Will we be salt to our world or will we be, essentially, “good for nothing”? In other words, Would our local community be noticeably worse off if our church suddenly vanished? If not, the salt has lost its flavor, its life-promoting, life-preserving essence.

Part of the difficulty we encounter in being salt to the world is theological. Our churches today are mostly built on the notion that the various “ministries of healing” are not, in and of themselves, our mission, but merely a means to an end—sharing the gospel. By gospel, of course, we mean the truth that Jesus died to save us from our sins. So we speak of compassion ministries as an “entering wedge” to get into people’s lives to give them the really “important stuff.” But the good news is that God is accessible and present among us and we are invited to enter a relationship with Him now.

If our calling as a church is to bear witness to this fact, ministries of compassion are themselves precisely that witness. The proverbial cup of cold water, according to Jesus, is not a means to some other end or a passport into a person’s life, but an act of kingdom witness that earns its own reward (Matt. 10:42).

It is worth repeating: Jesus spent more of His ministry healing than preaching. When Jesus instructs His disciples before sending them out, the pattern is the same: “As you go, preach this message: The kingdom of heaven is near.‘ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:7, 8, NIV).

Jesus repeats His message often: “The kingdom of heaven is near.” That is to say, God’s government of peace and justice is within your grasp—it’s all around you, in front of you. What are the disciples to do besides preaching the fact of the matter? They are to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. The disciples have already received abundantly from the kingdom of God. Now they are sent to give a taste of the kingdom life to others.

And the way Jesus teaches them to share the message is through healing. The physical healing that Jesus brings is a sign and foretaste of the kingdom and a demonstration of the power of the King. It is tangible evidence that God reigns and that His reign makes an actual, tangible difference in the world. The presence of God’s kingdom is more than a metaphysical reality; it affects the created order.

The ministry and teaching of Jesus should be enough to convince us that ministries of compassion and healing are not a pre-anything. They are the thing itself. When we understand the gospel as the here-and-now availability of the kingdom of God, suddenly, tutoring a child becomes just as cogent a witness as we consider a sermon to be if not more of a witness.

Proclaim the message

Now we’re talking! The Bible calls it preaching or proclaiming. This part of our ministry is profoundly important. The prophets of old and Jesus sincerely believed that they could speak the kingdom into existence. What I am suggesting, however, is that, because we have done so much talking, it might be best for most churches not to worry so much about the traditional matter of talking and instead to focus on the first two points first—being and doing the message—especially when it comes to our interaction with non-Christians.

The reason for this concentration is twofold. First, the quicker we are to speak, the more likely we are to miss the heart of the matter—the shared experience of something life transforming. We also risk trivializing the monumental issues of life.

I cringe with embarrassment whenever I hear a Christian trying to
explain the problem of suffering, especially to someone who is in the midst of it, as though the experiencing of pain was a piece of theological software. This kind of speech normally does a disservice to the inquirer, who is more often than not simply longing for a friend to share the pain and identify with the apparent absurdity of their agony. In so many ways, this sort of friend is himself or herself the best “explanation” that could be given.

Second, if we are experiencing some success at being a community that witnesses to God’s kingdom by its very life togetherness, tangibly loving the world for God’s sake, people will inquire of us about why we do what we do. And that is precisely the point of proclaiming the good news. It clarifies the why question. It gives us an opportunity to verbally explain that we are followers of Jesus and are anticipating the full presence of His kingdom when Jesus returns and puts all things right.

These days, people are immediately suspicious about an organization that constantly has to prop itself up with lots of talk. But when our words of proclamation arise naturally from our being and doing the message, they go to people’s hearts. The less we feel compelled to prove it by our words rather than letting our lives speak, the more authentic our witness will be. That authenticity will be noticed by our media-saturated, smoke-and-mirrors world, and it will be magnetic.

In proclamation what we say is also crucial. We can follow the same threepart pattern. Rather than inviting people to embrace mentally a particular teaching, we can invite them to believe something—namely, the reality of the kingdom. Belief in the reality of the kingdom is followed naturally by an invitation to enter that kingdom and its fellowship in the church; such an invitation makes sense to searching people because the community we are asking people to become a part of is one that the people we are inviting have seen to be truly desirable.

This means inviting a person to join the community rather than take a Bible study as a first step toward Jesus. After joining themselves to the community, they might begin to act like Christians and join other followers of Jesus in blessing our world in Jesus’ name. All along this process they will refine their theology and their worldview. Because of their new context in the church, their new beliefs will constantly be reinforced by new practices—worship, prayer, fellowship, forgiveness, service.

Eddie Gibbs is among recent authors who have popularized this way of evangelism by suggesting that in the postmodern world we must create a place for people to belong before they believe. Others have added to this by saying that the sequence might look like this: Belong-Behave-Believe; back to front as this may seem to be when looking through traditional eyes.

We can probably all think of someone who started coming to church but expressed some misgivings about the teachings of Christianity or Adventism. However, little by little they became followers of Jesus and committed to His church. The emerging church is discovering that this might be an intentional way of evangelism rather than something that happens by accident to those brave enough to join us before they believe exactly as we do.

The best evangelistic strategy is to be the church Jesus intended; to take as our message the message of Jesus and the apostles to courageously be the people of God living in kingdom relationships, doing the works of God as signs of the kingdom’s presence, and speaking the words of God so that people develop a clear picture of those they are worshiping and the ultimate purpose of God for His people. 

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Funeral services are good for people

American advice columnist Ann Landers once counseled a 17-year-old girl to attend her best friend’s funeral. She wrote in her column that “a funeral provides proof that the deceased is gone. It helps the bereaved to overcome denial mechanisms.” Shortly after that column was published, Ms. Landers received a letter from a widow who agreed: “You’re right, Ann. Don’t let anyone change your mind. I learned the lesson from bitter experience.” The widow related how her grieving was delayed and intensified over a 20-year period because she failed to have a funeral at the time of her husband’s death. She explained: “My husband was declared missing in action over France on June 10, 1944. In January of 1945 [he] was declared dead after his plane was found. I refused to believe it. News items about lost fliers who were found alive in unexpected places kept my hopes alive. Finally, I was forced to make the decision and I requested that [the remains they said were my husband’s] be buried in France. A flag came home. Almost 20 years later I took my son to France to visit his father’s grave. When the kindly custodian asked us whose grave we had come to see, my throat closed. I couldn’t speak or eat for 48 hours. I grieved as if my husband had just died. Even now, as I write these words I can feel my throat tighten. I realize I suffered all that agony because I had never witnessed the final farewell. I should have requested that my husband’s remains be sent home and had a funeral.”

That woman’s experience is not an isolated one among those who have suffered a loss but who, for various reasons, have not had or attended a funeral service for their loved one. Those who study and work closely with the bereaved understand that there are psychological pitfalls and dangers when funeral services are eliminated or abbreviated.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado, says: “The growing trend toward minimizing the funeral ritual or eliminating it all together has resulted in many people not knowing how to mourn in healthy ways. . . . Clinical experience suggests that when the funeral ritual is minimized or distorted, that mourning often becomes minimized or distorted. Likewise, when no funeral ritual occurs the mourner often adopts a complicated response style of delayed or absent grief.”

The reality is that funeral services are good for people. This is especially important to emphasize today because, in many cultures, traditions and rituals have become suspect in and of themselves. Here are eight benefits of having a funeral service.

1. **Begins grief recovery.** A funeral service inaugurates the beginning of the grief recovery process. This was articulated effectively by Erich Lindemann, M.D., while he was chief of psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. On November 28, 1942, Boston hosted a football game between Holy Cross and Boston College. After the game, hundreds of celebrating fans overcrowded the famous Coconut Grove nightclub. During the festivities, there was a sudden fire, and 492 people died in the flames.

   Lindemann and his colleagues worked with grieving family members, and Lindemann published a classic paper, *The Symptomology and Management of Acute Grief*. He wrote, “The funeral service is psychologically necessary to give opportunity for ‘grief work.’ The bereaved must be given the capacity to work through his grief if he is to come out of that situation emotionally sound.”

2. **Confirms death’s reality.** A funeral service confirms the reality that a death has occurred. As strange as it may seem, those closest to a loved one who has died often need evidence that the death has occurred. For many people, seeing leads to believing. Initial impulses
about death are to resist and deny.

This was something frequently encountered by Edgar N. Jackson, a minister and grief educator who served as a chaplain in the Air Force during World War II. In his book, *For the Living*, he tells of repeatedly witnessing denial from parents who received fateful telegrams from the War Department informing them their son had been killed during conflict. “It was my duty to visit families of servicemen in my particular unit who died. Again and again I found relatives denying reality and clinging to illusion. This they expressed by saying to me, ‘I know about the telegram and all that, but nothing can keep me from believing that some day the door will open and our son will come in and say, ... I was captured by the enemy and it has taken me all this time to get out.’ At other times they talked about the possibility of amnesia, or of his being shot down in a remote region. In each instance this was a carefully constructed denial that they chose to cling to rather than accept the painful truth.”

3. **Overcomes denial.** A funeral service is a vital mechanism that overcomes denial. William J. Worden, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the Harvard Medical School and author of *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, makes this important observation: “Whether one has a wake, an open casket, or closed casket is subject to regional, ethnic, and religious differences. However, there is strong advantage to having the family members see the body of the deceased loved one, whether it be at the funeral home or at the hospital. Even in the case of cremation the body can still be present at the funeral service in either an open or closed casket and then the cremation done after the service. In this way, the funeral service can be a strong asset in helping the survivors work through the first task of grief, which is to overcome denial and accept the reality of death.”

4. **Provides sense of control.** A funeral service provides a sense of control. Having to make funeral arrangements offers grievers an early opportunity to take action. Funeral service preparation transforms, for the griever, feelings of powerlessness into a greater sense of control.

Although survivors have had no way of preventing the death, now there are decisions that they must make, such as locating and calling a funeral firm, establishing the place and time of a funeral, selecting a casket, choosing clothing, and contacting and informing people. Such decision making begins providing grievers with a sense of control over their lives.

This becomes an important awareness because in the months ahead, survivors will have to take further control of their lives, forging a new identity without the presence of the deceased and building new lives for themselves.

5. **Invites community support.** A funeral service invites the community’s support. The funeral service brings the broader community of family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and acquaintances together to offer support. Consequently, the grieving begins the important movement of turning from hurting to healing as grievers receive empathy and compassion.

Without a funeral service, grievers are deprived of the opportunity to make this important transformation. In fact, many express regret at not having had a service of some kind. In their book on suicide and its aftereffects, *Silent Grief*, Christopher Lukas and Henry M. Seiden advise, “Early on ... there is at least one thing all survivors can do that many find helpful. They can involve themselves in normal rituals: a memorial service, a funeral, an announcement in the paper. Many survivors told us that this did not occur and that contributed to the family’s agony.” They cite a disappointed family member who said, “My brother’s family didn’t want a ‘party,’ so they decided to have nothing at all. We just went home.” And a wife stated, “We didn’t have a memorial service, we moved. There was no external sign of Sam’s suicide. It was a mistake.”

6. **Lets the light in.** The death of a loved one is a dark, depressing, and potentially despairing event. The funeral service provides opportunity for those hurting the most to be reminded that God is present in the midst of pain. They will receive comfort from the reading of scriptures such as 2 Samuel 22:29, 33, (NIV): “You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord turns my darkness into light. ... It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.”

Additionally, grievers will hear prayers offered by others asking God to bless and comfort them. The funeral service allows the light to penetrate the darkness of loss.

7. **Promotes grief release.** A funeral service promotes the release of grief emotions. In many segments of our society, it is not permissible, or we are not encouraged, to show emotion and feeling. However, this is not true at a funeral service. There, those present are free and even expected to shed tears, be sad, express hurt, and articulate fears for the future.

The funeral service becomes a place of refuge where the emotions of grief can be fully released.

8. **Allows the community to grieve.** A funeral service creates space and place for the community to grieve. People are social creatures in need of each other. This is especially true when there has been a death. The funeral service allows people to come together for mutual grieving and supporting. So basic and important is this sense of community togetherness in times of crisis that family members sometimes wisely override the wishes of the deceased who specified “no service” or “something very, very simple with only immediate family.”

In the book *Midlife Orphan*, author J. Brooks relates this story about “Mimi,” a beloved mother, grandmother, and friend to many.

continued on page 31
Platform decorum and dress

When an administrator telephoned to describe a congregation’s warfare over their minister’s platform dress, I remembered an illustration I had seen posted in scores of vestries over dozens of years. Researching the source, I found it came from this very journal.

If that depiction (reproduced below) were normative for all ministers, every clergy would be a middle-aged, white male dressed only in conservative business attire. And multiple congregations which have posted it as a model would have elevated this example to sacerdotal expectation, if not sacred mandate.

If a picture equals a thousand words, this illustration, which accompanied Ministry’s 1942 article, states more about cultural expectations among members than about any particular viewpoint. Of course times have changed as have expectations both from society in general and the subculture of church-attending believers. Similar debates of music and worship styles typically produce more heat than light as stereotypical opinions—“everyone else should look just like me”—cause many to judge rashly and harshly anyone who differs.

Recognizing wide diversity among clergy in just my denomination and the impossibility of advocating, much less enforcing, one style as appropriate dress, note some guiding principles, hopefully “with charity to all.”

Appropriate for the call. Through history, God has designated distinctive dress for spiritual leaders; sometimes, very elaborate and ornate such as bejeweled, multicolored attire for the high priest; sometimes as plain as a simple linen tunic. A wider range of possibilities than any single culture might adopt seems acceptable to heaven, so the wider question might ought to ask: “How does my dress and decorum display the Holy Spirit’s calling?”

Appropriate for the expectations. Among Adventists today, platform dress ranges from ornate pulpit robes in urban congregations to open-neck sport shirts in California. Sweaters in Scandinavia, barongs in the Philippines, dashikis in Africa, and Indonesian batiks may puzzle Thai worshipers with bare feet or Samoan pastors with bare legs. Women sans hats may distract worshippers in Jamaica, while members in economically challenged regions might wonder why waste funds on hosiery. Without mandating any particular style as the sole option, it seems appropriate that spiritual leaders should dress and conduct themselves in a way that will not scandalize the gospel either in the eyes of the community that gathers to worship or in the wider surrounding society. Young adults and families likely tolerate more casual approaches than retirees or those who equate classic, traditional approaches with morality. It seems to me that a conservative business suit is seldom inappropriate for men or women.

Appropriate for the climate. Once, in a super-hot tropical location, I observed that attendees might have considered the weather before garbing themselves in full suits, dress shirts, and ties. They explained their culture’s expectations, as well as their own self-image for professional ministry, which required formal attire, despite the weather, despite the retreat.

Appropriate for the culture. These same pastors could envision no alternatives. Although they were generous not to scold me for dressing in a lightweight shirt, their uncomfortable laughter at “my favorite verse” for tropical clergy attire (“they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat” Ezek. 44:18) demonstrated the seriousness of their understanding.

Appropriate for the site and situation. Common sense may dictate the necessity of formal attire in a cathedral pulpit where the preacher may don a flowing pulpit robe versus a small chapel where a business suit would “feel correct” for the setting, or an outdoor event in which a sport coat or “dressy casual” dress may fit the occasion.

Appropriate for the event. And speaking of the occasion, I hope pastors today would choose dark, dignified dress for a funeral or communion even if they otherwise might meet their congregations in less formal attire. I must add, however, that one of the most solemn ordinations in which I ever participated featured each candidate wearing a new pair of rubber flip-flop shoes.

Appropriate for multigenerational, multicultural leaders. Finally, remember that your posture, decorum, and overall demeanor will speak more effectively than any outfit. Our “new” illustration (see next page) includes younger participants of both genders from a variety of backgrounds. Options may vary. Appropriate, good taste, however, must be cultivated.
EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE PODIUM APPEARANCE

APPROPRIATE

INAPPROPRIATE

APPROPRIATE

APPROPRIATE
Teen smoking: the church can help

Andrew J. Weaver
and Howard W. Stone

Cigarette smoking is the chief preventable cause of premature disease and death in the United States. Each year more than 400,000 Americans die from smoking-related illnesses; a total of two million die in all developing countries combined. The World Health Organization estimates that given the current patterns, smoking will eventually kill about 500 million people alive today.

Smoking kills more Americans annually than AIDS, automobile accidents, suicide, murder, fire, alcohol, and illegal drugs combined. The early adolescent years (11 through 15) are the crucial life stage for preventing tobacco use, and it is uncommon for tobacco use to begin after high school.

Tobacco use among American teens

The rate of tobacco use among American teens is high and rising. From 1991 to 1994, smoking among eighth graders increased from 14 percent to 18 percent, among tenth graders from 20 percent to 25 percent, and among high school seniors from 27 percent to 31 percent. It is estimated that between one-third and one-half of adolescents who try only a few cigarettes become regular smokers, a process that takes an average of two to three years.

A key factor in the increased use of tobacco among youth is the rapid growth in the use of smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff) by young Americans. In the 1970s, most smokeless tobacco users were men over 50. This changed in the 1980s as the tobacco industry targeted a younger generation of American men.

At present, young males are the most common users of smokeless tobacco, with about 11 percent of male high school seniors being users. Rather than decreasing the use of cigarettes, in the end, smokeless tobacco frequently serves to introduce teens to regular cigarette smoking.

Besides this, tobacco is associated with the increased likelihood of young smokers using other addictive substances. Thus tobacco acts for some as a gateway drug. It is generally the first substance used by teens, with later substances being alcohol and illicit drugs.

The Surgeon General of the United States has found that 12- to 17-year-olds who said they smoked in the past 30 days were three times more likely to have used alcohol, eight times more likely to have smoked marijuana, and 22 times more likely to have used cocaine within the past 30 days than those teens who had not smoked.

Patterns of nicotine dependence

Nicotine dependence forms a pattern of compulsive use of nicotine-containing products, such as cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff, pipes, and/or cigars. The use of these various forms of tobacco results in nicotine tolerance and thus withdrawal symptoms when the tobacco use is discontinued.

As a person attempts to quit smoking or reduce the amount of nicotine used, several signs of withdrawal can begin within 24 hours, including depressed mood, insomnia, irritability, frustration, anger, problems with concentration, anxiety, restlessness, and weight gain.

Cigarette smoking has the most intense habit-creating pattern among tobacco products and is the most difficult to quit. There is usually a craving to use cigarettes. Many individuals who become nicotine dependent continue to smoke despite knowledge that they may have a medical condition, such as bronchitis, adversely affected by their smoking.

The tobacco industry spends billions of dollars on advertising and product promotion, much of which appeals directly to young people. Research show that teens exposed to these promotions are more likely to be smokers.
RESOURCES

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH); 2013 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 659-4310; <ash.org> has many resources, including a teen page on its Web site.

American Cancer Society; (800) ACS-2345; <www.cancer.org> annually sponsors the Great American Smokeout.

American Lung Association; (800) 586-4872; <www.lungusa.org> provides information on the health effects of tobacco use and the latest information on efforts to combat tobacco use among teens.

Foundation for a Smokefree America; P.O. Box 492028, Los Angeles, CA 90049; (310) 471-0303; <www.tobaccofree.com> was founded by R. J. Reynolds' grandson after he saw his father, brother, and other relatives die from cigarette-induced emphysema and cancer.

INFACT's Tobacco Industry Campaign Headquarters; 46 Plymouth Street, Boston, MA 02118; (800) 688-8797; <www.infact.org> is organized to stop the tobacco industry from addicting new customers, especially children and young people.

National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids; 1707 L Street NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036; (800) 284-KIDS; <www.tobaccofreekids.org>

Nicotine Anonymous World Services (NAWS); 419 Main Street, PMB #370, Huntington Beach, CA 92648; (415) 750-0328; <www.nicotine-anonymous.org> is an international group with 500 affiliates founded in 1985; <www.nicotine-anonymous.org> is organized to stop the tobacco industry from addicting new customers, especially children and young people.

NicNet, The Nicotine and Tobacco Network; <www.nicnet.brg> is a large Internet resource for smoking and tobacco Internet links sponsored by the Arizona Program for Nicotine and Tobacco Research.

Quitnet; <www.quitnet.net> is an Internet site provided by the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program. It has very useful information for those seeking to stop smoking or those wanting to help others quit.

HELP BOOKS

Developing School-Based Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Programs (Steve Sussman, Clyde W. Dent, Dee Burton, Alan W. Stacy, and Brian R. Flay; New Berry, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994) offers a full picture of the key issues in designing and implementing a school-based prevention and cessation program. Many aspects of this program would be useful in congregational settings.


Quit for Teens/Read This Book and Stop Smoking (Charles F. Wetherall, New York: Andrews and McMeel, 1995). Gives reasons for teens to stop smoking, explains why teens smoke, and offers techniques to stop.


Besides this, in the United States, annual illegal sales of tobacco products to minors total 950 million packs of cigarettes and 26 million containers of smokeless tobacco. About one-half of minors who attempt to purchase tobacco products report never being asked for proof of age.

The faith factor

Results of 26 separate studies conducted in the U.S., Great Britain, Switzerland, Nigeria, Australia, Norway, Israel, Canada, France, Scotland, and Ireland showed that greater religious involvement has been strongly associated with lower risk of use of tobacco and other addic- tives. The National Study on Youth and Religion recently found that teens who never attended church were almost three times more likely to smoke regularly than regular church worshipers (30.1 percent versus 11.9 percent). Many research studies on teen and young-adult drug use, including nicotine, show a consistently inverse relationship between frequent attendance at religious services and reporting religion as important in their lives. A study of 33,397 high-school students in 112 different communities in the U.S. measured 16 problem behaviors in seven areas: tobacco use, alcohol use, illicit drug use, sexual activity, depression and suicide, antisocial behaviors, and school problems. Analysis revealed that the number of youth involved in activities connected to religious institutions was strongly related to lower rates of all these negative behaviors. In Great Britain, a study involving 4,753 adolescents found that religious belief and practice had a strong association with a young person's attitudes toward the impropriety of substance abuse, including the use of marijuana, alcohol, glue, heroin, butane gas, and tobacco. If involvement in faith communities has a positive effect on teens' attitudes and behavior toward smoking cigarettes, then encouraging young people to be involved in reli-
gious life may be beneficial to those seeking to avoid tobacco. Teens who connect to a religious youth group may find it a helpful place to find peer support that can help them quit smoking. Tobacco-use prevention programs for teens would be a valuable ministry of the congregation, especially since the National Study on Youth and Religion indicates that about one in ten teenagers who regularly attend church smoke. Faith-based prevention and tobacco-cessation programs focus on minority groups, which have high levels of religious participation and suffer a disproportionately higher burden of tobacco-attributable illnesses and deaths, may be of particular value. 


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Funerals continued from page 26

When Mimi died, only the immediate family attended the graveside funeral service in accordance with her wishes. But so many people wanted to pay their respects that Ron, her son, organized a memorial service at home the day after the funeral. For nearly two hours (captured on video), more than one hundred friends, family members, and co-workers shared their memories of this beloved woman. They extolled a woman who saw only the good in everyone, who was a great sport, willing to try new experiences, passionately devoted to her family, and who made the world's best chicken soup. It was an extraordinary outpouring, marked with tears, laughter, and the love that was Mimi's legacy.

Thus, the funeral service and ritual, properly managed, deliver great therapeutic benefits to survivors. It ought to be viewed as an investment rather than an expenditure. Augustine spoke of this when he wrote: "The care of the funeral, the manner of burial . . . are [more] the consolation of the living than of any service to the dead." And, more recently, C. S. Lewis wrote, "Those who dislike the ritual in general . . . may be asked most earnestly to reconsider the question. It [the ritual] . . . renders pleasures less fugitive and griefs more endurable."
AWR is here.

Traveling where missionaries cannot go.

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